ADDRESS

ON THE

RELIGIOUS HISTORY AND CHARACTER

OF THE

PURITANS,

BY

R. W. THOMPSON,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

NEW ENGLAND SOCIETY

OF

TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA,

DECEMBER 20, 1868.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF THE SOCIETY.

TERRE HAUTE:
PRINTED BY ALLEN, BROWN & CO., 132 MAIN STREET.

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TERRE HAUTE, Dec. 24, 1868.

HON. R. W. THOMPSON,

Dear Sir:

At the annual festival of the New England Society on the evening of the 22d instant, it was unanimously resolved, "That we hereby tender our sincere thanks to Hon. R. W. Thompson for his able and instructive address, delivered before the New England Society on the 20th instant, on "the religious history and character of the Puritans;" and that he be requested to furnish a copy thereof for publication.

Your compliance will be gratifying to all who heard the address, and to many others, who have since expressed a desire to see it in print.

Very Respectfully, &c.,

M. A. JEWETT, Prest.

L. RYCE, Secy.

TERRE HAUTE, Dec. 25, 1868.

Gentlemen:

Yours of yesterday, communicating the resolution of the New England Society, which requests a copy of my address for publication, has been received.

The address, as you are aware, was prepared upon a very brief notice, and is, therefore, less perfect than I could desire it. Yet I do not hesitate to place it at your disposal, inasmuch as your society will be thereby gratified.

Very Respectfully, &c.,

R. W. THOMPSON.

Rev. M. A. JEWETT, and
L. RYCE, Esq.

ADDRESS.

Ladies' and Gentlemen of the New England Society:

When Galileo, led by the teaching of Copernicus, announced his belief that the sun stood fast in the centre of the planetary system, and that the earth itself was a planet revolving around it in an oblique circle, and upon its own axis, he was accused of the crime of heresy, for so bold and flagrant a denial of the doctrines of the Roman Church. Arraigned before the fearful bar of the inquisition he was forced, under a sentence of condemnation, which it then required more than human courage to withstand, to abjure his own convictions, in order to appease the pontifical wrath; and, yielding to the irresistible necessity of his condition, he did it in sackcloth and upon his bended knees. But, as he rose from the ground, stimulated anew by the strength of his honest convictions, he exclaimed: "*It does move for all that.*"—And it *has* moved, ever since the Great Creator gathered together its innumerable atoms from the field of illimitable space, and "the morning stars sang together,"—belting itself, by the laws which keep it within the circle of its own orbit, by a mysterious and invisible magnetic current, which has driven forward the world of human beings within its influence, under Providential guidance, in the onward and upward career of progress. Amongst these no people have grown to greatness with such marvelous rapidity as those for whom the new world was reserved, during all those long centuries of darkness which overshadowed the old. We, who now stand in the bright sun-light of these wonderful influences, find ourselves in the actual presence of an age far in advance of any that Galileo, or his inquisitorial triers ever dreamed of; of an age when the mind, the intellect, the genius of man, has thrown off the iron clogs with which tyranny would have dwarfed it, and is no longer manacled and tied down in ignorance and servility. Man, himself, has risen up to a truer and nobler dignity, and has learned to know that he was born for a higher destiny than to become a slave to his own passions, or the imperial will of others. He has reached that point of elevation where there is no element of nature that he does not seize upon and appropriate to himself. He lays his hands upon all that the earth and air contain,—above, below, and within,—and by his transforming touch, they obey his summons and do his bidding. Even Neptune, in a drowsy moment, has had his sceptre wrested from his grasp,

and the old god of Heathen Mythology is, every day, startled from his slumbers, away down in the depths of the sea, by the flashes of "tamed lightning," as they pass along the girdle which the fairy Puck—Shakspeare's "Merry wanderer of the night," promised to put

———"Round about the earth in forty minutes."

Space and distance are dissolving, between the old world and the new. The old civilizations are passing away, and we find ourselves in the very centre of the new civilization of the 19th century, sending forth the light of our example, and the benignant influences of Protestant Christianity, in every direction over the world. The present is working out problems which excited the credulity of mankind, in all the ages of the past. Even that which stimulated the bold and perilous adventure of Columbus, we are, ourselves, now engaged in solving. The primeval races of mankind, from the days of the Midianitish Merchants, endeavored to reach the rich treasures of the East, through the inhospitable regions lying between the Euphrates and the Indus, but nature had planted barriers before them they were unable to overleap. The heaps of desolate ruins which still attest the existence of Babylon, Ninevah, Petra—of Tyre and of Sidon—not only remain to verify the truth of prophecy, but to bring down to us incontestible evidences that it was a part of the Divine plan, from the beginning, that the earth should be encompassed, from East to West, by our form of Christian civilization. The streams of population which were driven westward from the Eastern shores of the Mediterranean rested long enough in the crowded thoroughfares of Europe to feel the impress of the Great Protestant Reformation upon their hearts and minds; and when the best and most adventurous of them found the lids of the Bible unclasped, they snatched it from the hands of a corrupt and ambitious hierarchy and plunged with it into the forests of a virgin continent, where alone, throughout the world, they could erect altars to Truth, to Virtue, and to Freedom.

There are those who pretend to see in all this rapid progress nothing but the unmistakable evidences of decay,—who characterize it as a wild vertigo of the mind which must inevitably terminate in delirium. With these the "wish is father to the thought." The history of the long struggle, which wrought out these results, shows them to be "dreamers of idle and unprofitable dreams;" and to be wedded still to the false opinions which have grown out of the old and decaying forms of civilization. They have not yet realized that these old forms are melting away before the light now blazing upon the altars of *our* civilization, as surely as the chilliness of winter is dispelled by the genial

warmth of Spring. The Bible and the printing press are the Archimedean lever which moves the Protestant world to still further progress, and to results as irresistible as the tides of the sea, and as certain as the return of the seasons. How, as if by the touch of the magician's wand, mankind sprang forward and upward, when these two elements of power made them stronger than the fabled Hercules! The Bible, as the only source of true wisdom, has ennobled our nature, invigorated our intellect, expanded our thoughts, enlightened our understanding, given us new conceptions of right and clearer visions of the truth. And while it does not break the spell which binds us to earth and its joys, it takes our thoughts up to a higher, better and holier world, where there are still purer joys and a whole eternity of bliss,—of bliss which human thought is unable to comprehend, and which the eloquence of angels cannot portray. The Press prosecuted its inquiries in Science, Philosophy, Literature, Morals and Religion,—first, with caution, until its full freedom was asserted and maintained,—and then with a boldness which shook the authority of the past, and marked out new fields for the energies and intellect of man. When it broke loose from the old opinions,—whose leaden weight had pressed so heavily, for centuries, upon the world,—it inaugurated new modes of investigation, opened new avenues to truth, and forged new weapons of attack upon bigotry, error and superstition. These have begun to crumble at its touch, and we upon whom its sunlight is shining so brilliantly, will become unworthy of the dignity and elevation it has bestowed upon us, if we consent to their achievement of any future triumphs.

Those who deny the contribution to the production of these results, made by the "Pilgrim Fathers" who landed on the shores of Massachusetts two hundred and forty-eight years ago, have read history to little purpose, or designedly shut their eyes to some of its most interesting and instructive lessons. The facts that they braved the dangers of the sea, whose tracks had not yet been marked upon the navigator's chart;—that they turned their backs upon their homes in the old world, and voluntarily exchanged them for an uninhabited coast,—icy and rock-bound;—that their hearts did not fail them amid the wild roaring of the storm, or the wilder war-whoop of the savage; all these combine to show that they had enduring fortitude and firmness, and that they were both brave and courageous. But their bravery was not merely that which makes us insensible to physical fear, —a quality which the lower animals possess in a far higher degree than man,—nor was their courage alone that martial fire which arms a man for his honor or his country:—they

were of that higher sort which prompts obedience to the commands of conscience and the dictates of duty, at the cost of treasure or of life; which comes welling up from the depths of honest hearts,—which gives vigor, elevation, and nobility to manhood,—which makes men near akin to angels, —which inspires to noble and unselfish action, and which panoplies its possessor in a coat of mail more impenetrable to the shafts of envy, malice, or destruction, than was that which the Crusader wore, to the sharp scimeter of the Turk, in the wars between the Crescent and the Cross. History records many deeds characterized by qualities such as these, but to none does it assign them in a higher degree than to Carver, and Bradford, and Winslow, and Standish, and Brewster, and Allerton, and their companions, who endured, unmurmuringly, a boisterous voyage of sixty-three days upon the Mayflower,—who, solemnly and "in the name of God," formed a political compact binding themselves to the enactment of "just and equal laws" and "constitutions,"—whose clothes, when they waded to the beach, were made like "coats of iron" by the freezing spray of the ocean,—who, upon their first landing at the "bottom of Cape Cod," were driven back to sea again by a "flight of arrows" from hostile Indians,—and who, at last, planted their infant colony upon the rock of Plymouth, at a time when nature was locked in by the chilly frosts of December,—for, in their own expressive words, "it snowed, and did blow, all the day and night, and froze withal." What courage ever surpassed that which bore up and sustained this band of noble men and women, while steering their bark along the shore, in search of a harbor? The scene is thus described: "After some hours' sailing, a storm of snow and rain begins;—the sea swells;—the rudder breaks;—the boat must now be steered with oars; —the storm increases;—night is at hand;—to reach the harbor before dark, as much sail as possible is borne;—the mast breaks into three pieces;—the sail falls overboard;—but the tide is favorable. The pilot, in dismay, would have run the boat ashore in a cove full of breakers. '*About with her,*' exclaimed a sailor, '*or we are cast away.*'" The gallant Farragut, when lashed to the maintop of his noble ship, with leaden hail thick about him, gave no more necessary and important order than that. This stern command of the unterrified seaman was promptly obeyed, or the whole of that precious and invaluable cargo would have been lost. The ship was got about immediately,—again

> "She walked the waters like a thing of life,
> And dared the elements to strife,"

—rode over the rolling and tossing surf of the sea—found her way into the sound under a protecting lee of land, and

discharged her adventurous crew in the dark, and rain,—when they were wet, and cold, and weak, and had no other strength left than that which springs from a trusting confidence in God and Truth.

Let no false dissembler tell us that these were not great and noble men and women,—for they were so in the highest and most exalted meaning of the terms. And since you, who are their children, have invited me, who sprang from the Cavaliers, and in whose veins there runs no drop of Puritan blood, to portray their character, as a prelude to your approaching festival, allow me here to say, for myself, that I could no more stand unmoved on the shore of Plymouth than amongst the ruins of Jamestown,—that it is our solemn duty to remember both the one and the other of these precious spots where our institutions were first planted, and that now,—after the battle-smoke of civil war has cleared away;—it is most befitting that we should kindle afresh our own patriotism by remembering that, however unlike our fathers were in some respects, they all assembled around the same national altar, and mutually burned upon it, incense to God and Liberty. Revolutionary Virginia, and Revolutionary Massachusetts were twin-sisters in that national galaxy of States, whose light went out, so gloriously, over the world. And whensoever there shall be one who shall strive to pluck from our history a single page which records their common labors in defence of human rights, let his calumnies be met with indignation, and his sneers and reproaches with contempt. The present is a suitable occasion for us to repeat and remember, the words of that great New Englander who, in intellect, rose above all his peers, and which he spoke when contemplating the lives and the death of a son of Massachusetts and a son of Virginia: "Although no sculptured marble shall rise to their memory, nor engraved stone bear record of their deeds, yet will their remembrance be as lasting as the land they honored. Marble columns may, indeed, moulder into dust, time may erase all impress from the crumbling stone, but their fame remains; for with AMERICAN LIBERTY it arose, and with AMERICAN LIBERTY ONLY can it perish."

In contemplating the character of the Puritan Fathers of New England it must not be forgotten, that it was not entirely developed in this country, but that it was formed and partly developed during their residence in Europe,—that they gathered in the old world the seed they have scattered so profusely in the new. To fully understand then, what "manner of men" they were, it is necessary that we shall group together a few important facts in British history,—or rather, facts connected with the history of Christianity in Great Britain,—for the name of *Puritan* grew out of religious

controversy in that country, and their efforts to purify the English Church, because of its adherence to the rites and ceremonies of the Church of Rome.

The primitive stock of Britons from whom we have descended, were rude and unlettered, yet they were courageous enough, during all the years of Roman domination over them, and those of the Danish invasions, as well as after the Norman Conquest, to maintain a religious faith of their own, and the traditionary belief that it was planted amongst them by the ministry of St. Paul. Their modes of worship, with all their rites and ceremonies, were plain and simple, and whether drawn from those of an Apostolic church or not, they were designed to be expressive only of the sincerity of their religious convictions. Their churches took the Episcocal form, and when, in the year 597, they were brought in contact for the first time with the Church of Rome, by the visit of St. Augustine, they refused to acknowledge the spiritual supremacy of Pope Gregory, but extended to his emissaries the right to worship amongst them in whatever form they pleased, and to maintain whatever religious faith they thought fit. The object of the Pope was, then and always, to blend the temporal and spiritual power in his own hands; in other words, to unite the State with the Church, so that the entire christian world should bow in humiliation before him, as "*the vicar of God on earth.*" The British christians had no such thought, and, therefore, maintained their own independence,—yet, for the first time in several hundred years, conceded the freedom of religious faith and worship. The war between these opposing ideas was long and fierce. The blood of the murdered monks of England, drenched the soil at Bangor, but it was like the sowing of Dragon's teeth, or the opening of Pandora's box;—it makes the blood boil to recount the thousands of ills which followed it. The Saxon Kings were won over to the side of Rome, but the native Britons struggled on with a courage which never quailed in the presence of royal or pontifical power. The fires of incense flashed from the altars of the Romish Sees of York and Canterbury,—the vestments of their Priests glared with ornaments, while they bent themselves before their holy relics, and worshipped the images of their saints, but the stern firmness of our Anglican ancestors did not give way before all these glittering ceremonials. No nation of people on earth ever clung to their integrity with more tenacity and devotion than did they to their simple christian faith and the plain and unadorned ceremonials of their worship. They excited the hostility of the Pope to such a degree that, finding himself unable to reduce them to obedience by the agency of Italian priests and monks, he

tendered his protection to William of Normandy, if he would invade and conquer Great Britain in the name of the "Apostolic See" of Rome. Everybody knows the result. The Norman invasion and conquest followed. The consecrated banner and "hair of St. Peter" which William bore were given him by the Pope as emblematical of the pontifical sanction, and when his army reached London, the Romish hierarchy,—with a traitorous pusillanimity which has few parallels in history,—turned over the British Government to him in the name of the Pope!—though, in order to do so, they had to betray the cause of their Saxon protectors. This banding together of the ecclesiastical and political power—the spiritual and the temporal—led, as it was designed it should, to a close union between Church and State, and he was considered a heretic, and worse than an infidel, who did not recognize the rightful authority of the Pope to make and unmake Kings,—to absolve their subjects from their allegiance, and to subject all the nations of earth to his own dominion. Yet the British christian still resisted, and the long list of martyrs which they furnished shows how manfully they did so. The contest between these opposing ideas extended over a period of several centuries, with varying measures of success, as the interest of the British monarch prompted him to take one or the other side. It was a contest between power and right—falsehood and truth—superstition and christianity—prelates and people.

The ambitious Hildebrand occupied the pontifical chair while William the conqueror sat upon the British throne. But William was no less ambitious, and soon saw that they could not be the joint masters of England—that in the government of his own kingdom he must have neither a superior at Rome nor a partner at home. They wasted their lives in a fruitless struggle for supremacy,—which the successors of Hildebrand finally succeeded in achieving during the reigns of subsequent and more pliant Kings. In the year 1212 King John was deposed by the Pope, and the old Barons, incensed at his cowardice and humiliation, extorted from him the "Great Charter" upon which English liberty is founded and from whence American liberty was drawn. The Pope opposed and the British christians and people defended it. The contest engendered such corruption in the Roman Church, that these led at last to the beginning of the Reformation by Wycliffe and his followers—the Lollards. The Pope triumphed in obtaining the possession of both Church and State, but there was no period either before or after this beginning of the Reformation when the British christians were entirely exterminated. The great cities wore the yoke with tame submissiveness, but amongst the masses of the

people there were never wanting those who were not ready to endure persecution and to suffer reproach in defence of those principles out of which the Reformation first and Protestantism finally sprang. The oppressive load was at last partially thrown off during the reign of Henry VIII; who, if he did quarrel with the Pope about the matter of divorce, was made the Providential instrument of good, as many worse men than he, have been, both before and since. At one time he defended the papacy against the hard blows of Luther, but at last succeeded in separating the English from the Roman Church, and becoming himself its head and protector. But, in the act of separation, neither Henry nor the English Parliament saw the necessity of cutting off from the Church the ceremonials which had been fastened upon it by the influences of Rome, and bringing it back to its primitive simplicity. These were left to eat into it like a cancer, and to sever from it many of those who clung to the plain teachings of the Gospel, rather than the varying traditions of men.

Henry VIII left two daughters—Mary by Catharine of Arragon, and Elizabeth by Anne Boleyn. Although the Parliament declared them illegitimate and incapable of succeeding to the Crown, in consequence of his divorce from his wives, yet they both became Queens of England. Mary favored the Roman Catholic religion, with all the pomp it had borrowed from paganism, and endeavored to turn back the tide of the Reformation which had been advanced under the reign of Edward VI. Elizabeth, herself, had gone to the Romish confessional, and, at the commencement of her reign, retained a majority of Roman Catholics in her royal council. But when the King of Spain, her brother-in-law, proposed to make her his wife, and to remove her scruples upon the subject by a dispensation from the Pope, she came to realize the state of dependence to which her kingdom would be again reduced, if she recognized the supremacy of the pontificate. Accordingly, she dismissed her Romish councillors, and resolved to give her personal and official influence to the work of the Reformation, and the establishment and protection of the Protestant religion. At this time those who afterwards became Puritans, as well as those who, under the lead of John Wesley, became Methodists, belonged to the Church of England. The Protestant Reformers had become strong under the protection given them during the reign of Edward VI., and, by the second year of Elizabeth's reign, John Knox was enabled to lay the foundation of Presbyterianism in Scotland.

During the reign of Edward, the Church Liturgy had been established very much as it now stands, and the divisions which arose in the time of Elizabeth grew out of the ques-

tion of conformity or non-conformity to it. Amongst the Protestants there were those who advocated an adherence to it, who were known as Conformists. There were also those who insisted that it still retained too many of the ceremonials of the Church of Rome, who were known as Non-conformists or Puritans. The name of the latter was derived from that of a sect which arose about the end of the third century, called Novatians, and also Cathari, from the Greek word *Catharos*, which means *pure*. It was therefore conferred, as I have already intimated, to signify that they were anxious to purify the Church by the introduction of more simple forms of worship than those brought over from Rome and which they insisted were still retained by the Reformed Church of England. Their object was to bring back the Church more nearly to what it had been amongst the primitive Britons, before the visit of St. Augustin, and to retain nothing to remind them of the superstitions of the Roman Church, with its altars, and sacred relics, and priestly vestments, and images of saints, and such other things as, in their opinion, tended to convert the priesthood into an ambitious hierarchy, and to make religious worship more like Paganism than that taught by the Apostles, who, at the first organization of the Church at Jerusalem, on the day of Pentecost, and under the preaching of Peter, baptized "three thousand souls" after a simple act of repentance in the name of the Redeemer.

Thus again the English people became divided by two conflicting and opposing ideas. A considerable portion of the clergy took sides with the Puritans, but a majority, together with the Queen, were enabled to mould the policy of the Government in favor of the Liturgy as established by the Church and Parliament. There was no controversy upon doctrinal points—the whole question being the extent to which reform should be carried, and this being influenced by the degree of authority which one party was anxious to confer upon, and the other to take away from the clergy. It is easy to see, however, that in any country where a State religion prevails,—that is, where the State and Church employ their joint authority to make everybody think one way, and to oppress all those who refuse obedience,—there must necessarily, be concentrated in the hands of the clergy a degree of authority utterly inconsistent with freedom of thought, and more calculated to breed amongst them pride, vanity, irreligion, and corruption than that child-like humility and meekness which enabled the greatest of the Apostles, without self-abasement, to declare to the christians of Corinth: "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."

Elizabeth was a Queen of great firmness of purpose. She was a most extraordinary woman, and, in many respects, one of the greatest of English monarchs. She carried her royal prerogative to the utmost limits, and so exercised it in favor of the established Church that she claimed the right to dictate to her subjects their religious faith, and to the clergy the character of the ornaments and habits they should wear. The conformists acknowledged the right; the non-conformists denied it. And as the latter became more and more freed from the trammels upon their consciences which had so long held them in obedience to authority, they became more and more inclined to inquire for themselves into the nature of scripture truths. Hence, before the close of her reign, disputes arose concerning predestination, free will, and other points of doctrine, which led her to the adoption of the severest measures, with a view to the suppression of the right of free religious thought. The Puritans, of course, with all the other non-conformists, resisted all her royal edicts. This they could not do openly, however, on account of the persecution to which such open resistance always leads, when it is directed against the possessors of arbitrary power—whether ecclesiastical or political. But they cherished, in their hearts, a sentiment of devotion to free thought so strongly, that the combined power of both Church and State was unable to extinguish it, and, by the year 1566, they resolved to lay aside entirely the English liturgy, break off from the Church, and meet in assemblies by themselves and worship God in their own way—deriving their form of worship from the Genevan Church, which bore the impress of the great mind of Calvin.

James I. was the immediate successor of Elizabeth. Being, at the time of her death the King of Scotland, where he had indicated some preference for the reformed religion of the Presbyterians, it was supposed that he would extend his royal protection to the non-conformists in England. But he proved to be even more relentless than Elizabeth. During the first year of his reign he directed a Conference to be held in his presence between the Episcopalians and the Puritans, at which he was won over completely to the former, by being made to realize that his own power depended upon a union between "priesthood and royalty," and so completely was he enraptured by this idea that the Archbishop of Canterbury declared that "he verily believed the King spoke by the authority of God." A proclamation soon followed, commanding the Puritans to conform themselves to the worship of the established Church—treating them, in the language of a historian, as "a pack of obstinate wretches, who deserved to have no favor shown them"! In his speech to Parliament he called them a "sect insufferable in any well governed com-

monwealth." They were subjected to much contumely and persecution by Bancroft, Archbishop of Canterbury, and were looked upon "as enemies to the King and monarchy." At last, driven to the point of desperation by the continued hostility of the King and Clergy, a part of the Puritans took refuge in Holland, because, in that country the reformed doctrines of Calvin prevailed. They were directed there by William Brewster. They did not *all* go, either because they were unable, or did not desire it. Those who remained were compelled to endure persecution still longer, and, in 1614, desired permission of the King to go and settle in New England. It was denied them, and they were held in such contempt at Court that they were divided by one of the King's courtiers into two classes—"the Puritan-Knave and the Knave-Puritan."

About that time, in the year 1616, there was published in London "a description of New England," by Captain John Smith, who had visited it two years before, with a map of the country which some of you will recollect, as I exhibited it to you at the formation of your "Pilgrim Society" two years ago. This is a curious book, well worthy of perusal, not only on account of its quaint old English style, but to show what ideas then prevailed of the geographical extent of this country. For example, it says: "New England is that part of America in the Ocean Sea opposite to *Nova Albyon* in the South sea; discovered by the most memorable Sir Francis Drake in his voyage about the world. In regard whereto this is styled New England, being in the same latitude.—New France, off it, is Northward. Southward is Virginia, and all the adjoining continent, with New Granada, New Spain, New Andolosia, and the West Indies."

The attention of the Puritans in Holland being thus called to America, as a place that would probably afford them shelter from persecution, they made an effort, in 1617, to obtain the consent of the London Company to settle in "the most Northern parts of Virginia." For that purpose they sent John Carver and Robert Cushman to England. We may form some idea of their condition and character at that time, from the language in which they conveyed their request, written by Robinson and Brewster. They said: "We are well weaned from the delicate milk of our mother country, and inured to the difficulties of a strange land; the people are industrious and frugal. We are knit together as a body in a most sacred covenant of the Lord, of the violation whereof we make great conscience, and by virtue whereof we hold ourselves straitly tied to all care of each others good, and of the whole. It is not with us as with men whom small things can discourage." After much delay their request was

finally granted in 1619, and permission to emigrate was extended both to the Puritans in Holland and those at Leyden, in England. Of course, there was no delay in their preparations for departure, and by August, 1620, they were ready to sail from the port of Southampton, on board the Mayflower and the Speedwell—their united capacity being only two hundred and forty tons. They were feasted by their brethren at Leyden before their departure, and refreshed "with singing of psalms," which Edward Winslow says "was the sweetest melody that ever mine ears heard;" and then, says he, we "gave them a volley of small shot and three pieces of ordnance; and so, lifting up our hands to each other, and our hearts for each other to the Lord our God, we departed."—On the 5th of August they left the port of Southampton, but an unfavorable wind soon blew the Speedwell back to the English port of Plymouth, and left the Mayflower alone upon the broad ocean, with its crew of one hundred souls, who were landed at Plymouth Rock, as we have already seen, on the 20th day of December, 1620, having no warrant from their sovereign, and no valuable or available charter from the London Company.

This is no place for an examination into the condition of the English Church at this time, but I cannot avoid saying that Providence must have directed these events; for if the new world had not thus been made a place of refuge for those who were persecuted in England for daring to think for themselves on religious subjects, it is not impossible, perhaps not improbable, that the progress of the Great Protestant Reformation would have been arrested, and the iron heel of pontifical authority again planted upon the necks of the British Christians. It is well understood that the political affairs of England had then become so complicated—more particularly in reference to the defence of the Palatinate—that James gave up to the Duke of Buckingham and to his mother, the disposition of all the offices, and that the latter, who had the greater influence and was a "zealot for the Romish religion," would consent to the appointment of none that were not "well inclined to Rome, or at least indifferent to all religion." Count Gondemar, the Spanish embassador, seeing this condition of affairs, so favorable to the Church of Rome, said, in one of his official dispatches to Spain: "That never was there more hope of England's conversion to Rome than now; for there are more prayers offered here to the *mother* than to the *son*." However this may be, none of us are willing to unbelieve what we have been taught by all our fathers, of whatsoever faith, that God did watch over the Puritans as they sailed across the sea—that he remained with them during all the trials and perils of their early settlement—and

that when they came to found the institutions which have protected us so long, it was consistent with his Providence that *free thought* should be made the corner-stone, and *free speech* the key-stone of the arch that spans the magnificent citadel of our liberty.

We have not time for much further comment upon English history, but cannot omit a brief reference to a few leading events in order to understand the character of the Puritans who still remained there, and who furnished emigrants to other parts of New England. James I. died in 1625, and was succeeded by Charles I. who, from the beginning of his reign, resolved upon maintaining all the royal privileges and prerogatives which had been asserted by any of his predecessors. He placed in the hands of Laud, the Bishop of London, and afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, a large share of the ecclesiastical power, and his prejudice against the Presbyterians and Puritans was such as to carry him to any extent in opposition to them, with the view of their ultimate extinction. Probably the excesses on one side led to excesses on the other, as such is generally the case; but the Church party became identified with certain customs which the Puritans earnestly opposed;—as for example, the feast of the dedication of Churches, commonly called *wakes*, and the habit of visiting ale houses and using other recreations on Sunday.—The latter charged upon the former that their object was to go over to Rome, and the controversy, as might have been anticipated, resulted in the adoption of harsh and stringent measures by the King. At this distance of time, and with society organized as it now is, it is not easy to understand either the character or effect of these measures;—and if it were necessary it would not now be expedient to detail them. There is one thing, however, which ought not to be passed by, because it goes far to show the customs of the times,—and some of those to which the Puritans were violently opposed,—that is the encouragement given by the Church party to "stage-plays, balls, and masques." For writing a book against these practices William Prynne was tried before the Star-Chamber Court of the King, his book was condemned to be burnt by the common hangman, he to be set in the pillory, and imprisoned for life, his ears cut off, and he fined five thousand pounds, because the object of his book was to show that these practices tended to carry the Church back again to that of Rome. Of course, such a condition of affairs as this could not last long without producing an open rupture. It led to the Revolution, the death of Charles, after trial and conviction, the Rump Parliament, and the protectorate of Oliver Cromwell, during which religious liberty and free thought had the protection of the government. The execu-

tion of Charles was not the least notable of these events, as it was calculated to excite so much of passion in the minds of the supporters of the royal prerogative, and to show what they considered to be, at least a palliation, for their own severities after the restoration of the Stuarts to the throne. I have a *fac simile* of the warrant upon which Charles was executed, showing, by the bold signatures of those who signed it, that no hand shook and no nerve quaked at the performance of an act which its authors regarded as necessary to the maintainance of public liberty, and especially of the liberty of conscience. The name of Oliver Cromwell stands third, and it also contains the names of Edward Whalley, William Goff and John Dixwell, the three Regicides who found shelter and protection in New England. Others were not so fortunate, and were arrested, tried and executed after the restoration.

It is not to be wondered at that these transactions caused many more of the Puritans to emigrate to America—especially as those who first came had been successful in establishing themselves in the colony of New Plymouth. The number increasing, the colony of Massachusetts Bay was established in 1629, and that of New Haven by those who fled from the persecutions of Laud, and from the Star-Chamber tribunals of Charles. Thus Puritanism, although never extinguished in England, found that protection in this country which has made the descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers amongst the leading men in the world. There is no civilized country which is not impressed with their ideas. There is no sea which they have not explored. There is no island in the sea which they have not visited. There is no language which they do not speak. There is no adventure too bold for them to undertake. Engaged in all the pursuits of life, they carry into each of them a degree of energy which insures success. If there is a contest for liberty in any of its forms, they are sure to be its defenders—though the conflict may be upon the field of battle. If the old forms of civilization are to be broken down to make room for the new, they are amongst the first to assail them. And if Protestant Christianity is to be spread over the world, they are always ready, with the open Bible in their hands, to become its heralds to the uttermost parts of the earth. We have seen that they would not otherwise be the true descendants of the Puritan Fathers of Great Britain, who tried, as we have seen, in the school of adversity and affliction, through many long years of persecution, laid the foundation of that stern, robust and manly character which has, to so great an extent, influenced and moulded the character of those who still venerate their memory and cherish a remembrance of their virtues.

Here, perhaps, I ought to stop, and should do so, but for some popular ideas which are entertained in reference to the character of the immediate descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers of New England, and which are often repeated by way of reproach. In considering these it is necessary to remember that we live in an age, and are surrounded by circumstances, which render it exceedingly difficult for us, correctly, to comprehend the true character of transaction which occurred even a century ago. We often misunderstand those which transpire in our immediate vicinity, and when they occur before our own eyes, they scarcely ever impress two minds in the same way. Each age has its own habits, and makes its own impress. In the brightest days of Rome, suicide was considered one of the highest virtues,—now it is a crime against society. In the patriarchal days marriages occurred between members of the same family,—now they are prohibited. Even in our own country, manners and customs have undergone great changes within the recollection of many of us, and I remember myself to have seen many things done by men of the revolutionary era, which, if repeated in society now, would be laughed at, by people who feel themselves peculiarly charged with the duty of commenting upon, and finding fault with, the conduct of others.

It is tauntingly said that the Puritans *hung witches!* Well, we would hang them too if we believed in them, provided we could catch them! But we live in the nineteenth century and do not believe in them, and that constitutes the whole difference between them and us. And because of this difference, we seem to suppose it impossible that any body but the Puritans could ever have entertained an opinion contrary to ours. Let us see, for a moment or two, how this is. It is written in Exodus "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live;" and in other parts of the Holy Scriptures we find references made to witches and to using charms and invocations. For example: at one place it is said, "And the soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, and after *wizards*, I will set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people." Lev. 20-6. At another place, "An enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer," are all characterized as an abomination unto the Lord. Deut. 18,-10, 11, 12. And the Apostle Paul, in writing to the Galatians has put down witchcraft as amongst those "works of the flesh" which are so condemned "that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Gal. 5, 20. This scriptural teaching gave rise to a belief amongst the early christians in the direct agency of evil spirits in human affairs, and it was many centuries before this impression was removed. In the

13th century sorcerers and witches were burned in Germany. Pope Innocent VIII, in 1484, published a bull for their punishment. This was enforced by the subsequent bulls of Pope Alexander VI, in 1494; Pope Leo X, in 1521, and Pope Adrian VI, in 1522. In the year 1515, five hundred witches were burned at Geneva, 1000 were executed in one year at Como, 157 in Wartzburg in two years, and the number executed in Germany after the bull of Pope Innocent has been estimated at 100,000. A witch was burned in the Swiss Canton of Glarus in 1780, four years after the date of our declaration of Independence, and long after the Puritans had abandoned the practice. Statutes against witches were passed in England during the reigns of Henry VI, Henry VII, Elizabeth and James, as late as 1603. These were not repealed until 1736, and during the time they were in force 30,000 witches were executed in Great Britain. Sir Walter Scott gives an account of an old woman who was executed as a witch in 1772. Lord Bacon—who yet remains without a superior in the world of letters—was a firm believer in witches. And who is there amongst us all who has not been almost persuaded to believe in their reality, when, under the spell of Shakspeare's genius, we find them coming into our very presence, transformed into living, moving and speaking beings, like the three who stopped the way of Macbeth upon the "blasted heath" with their "prophetic greetings?" And yet, notwithstanding all this, we hear the early New England Puritans flippantly condemned, because—influenced by the almost universal christian sentiment of their day—they executed *twenty* persons in all for the crime of witchcraft! And this, too, when there are thousands of people still living who implicitly rely upon the virtue of a forked twig of witch-hazel, as a divining rod to tell where water may be found! and thousands of others who nail horse-shoes upon the lintels of their doors and windows to keep evil spirits from entering! and still other thousands who consult some juggling astrologer to learn the secrets of the future! We must not forget that we should transport ourselves back to these old times, in order rightfully to understand the sentiments and opinions that then prevailed, so that we may deal fairly and justly with them. There is no rule better than the golden one which commands that, "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise."

And it is objected against them that they were exclusive, and required too strict conformity to their peculiar religious faith and mode of worship. This was undoubtedly a fault, judged from our stand point, but it was not theirs alone—it was equally the fault of that age. My ancestors—the Virginia cavaliers—did the same thing. The fact is, the main dif-

ference between the early Puritan and Cavalier legislation, in reference to the observance of the requirements of their respective churches, consisted in the fact that it pointed in opposite directions—one towards and the other from the Church of England. In 1623, the Legislature of Virginia passed an act subjecting every person who absented himself from divine service on Sunday, to a fine of "*a pound of tobacco*," and if it continued for a month, to a fine of fifty pounds. They also, under a conviction of religious duty, required strict conformity to the canons of the Church of England, "both in substance and circumstance." In 1631, they made the swearing of an oath punishable by fine, a provision which, upon our statute book, has been a nullity in consequence of the impossibility of its execution. These statutes were repeated from time to time,—especially that requiring uniformity in religious faith and worship. And so particular were they in reference to the proper observance of the ceremonies of the Church, that Henry Coleman, in 1634, was excommunicated for forty days, for using scornful speeches, and putting on his hat in church! And in reference to an observance of the Sabbath, an act was passed in 1657, providing that there should be no travelling on Sunday, and no labor, or shooting of guns;—and the penalty for any of these was a hundred pounds of tobacco, or being placed in the public stocks. The Puritans, therefore, were not peculiar in their exactions in regard to the observance of religious duty.

And the early provisions of law in reference to the *Quakers* were much the same in Massachusetts and Virginia. You remember how these quiet and unobtrusive people were treated by your forefathers;—how they were driven away to seek refuge elsewhere, and to enjoy their own religious belief. And you have often been at a loss for arguments to defend this aggression upon rights which all of us now acknowledge. But the Cavaliers did the same thing precisely;—showing that your ancestors and mine yielded, under circumstances very different from those surrounding us, to conclusions which you and I would be most unwilling to adopt. In 1659 the Legislature of Virginia passed an act declaring that the Quakers were "an unreasonable and turbulent sort of people," who "contrary to law do daily gather together unto them unlawful assemblies and congregations of people teaching and publishing lies, miracles, false visions, prophecies and doctrines" which were calculated "to destroy religion, laws, communities and all bonds of civil society," and providing that no ship should bring a Quaker into the colony under a penalty of $100 sterling—that if any Quaker shall arrive there he should be apprehended and imprisoned "without bail and mainprize" till they adjure the country or give

security to depart and not return;—if any such one should return, he should be dealt with in the same way the second time; and if any returned the third time they should be "proceeded against as *felons;*"—and the publication of their books or pamphlets was prohibited at the peril of the publisher.

I refer to these facts to show that the age in which our early fathers lived had its peculiarities and prejudices which were confined to no one class, nor to any one religious faith. They grew out of the times, and were more universal than any of the sentiments of our times. We may fancy ourselves wiser than they were,—and, in some respects we are,—but if we deal candidly we are constrained to admit that we are not their superiors in any of those essentials of character—integrity of purpose, firmness in the pursuit of right, devotion to truth, and purity of motive—which go to make up the true man, and fit him for the high and responsible duties of life. They met their obligations firmly and discharged them nobly:—we can do no more, and it becomes us to see that we do no less. Separated for a time by opposing sentiments and conflicting ideas, they came together, at last, in the highest and holiest of earthly causes. By their united wisdom they moulded institutions of Freedom, without which the world would be turned back in its career of progress. They stamped our laws with the impress of their virtue and integrity,—and we shall prove ourselves to be unworthy of such an ancestry if we have not virtue and integrity enough to maintain them against all foes, whether from within or without.

Observed within the circle of the light now shining upon us, both the Cavaliers and the Puritans had their errors; but they had virtues which rose above these so high as to obscure them to all except the ignorant and envious. While we would avoid the errors of both, it will be well for us, if we imitate the virtues of either. This is no time for disturbing the dust in the graves of our fathers:—let them sleep, until he who will call the nations before his bar, shall re-form and re-animate it. The work which lies before us, is great enough to demand our united energies. The labor of our fathers must not be lost by neglect, at our hands. We must see that there be no chilling frost to wither the fruits of the Great Protestant Reformation. We must take care that Liberty is preserved, in all its variety of forms. There must be no hesitancy or halting in the contest between truth and error—right and wrong;—between Protestantism and all the forms of antagonism by which it may be assailed. We must not forget the responsibilities resting upon us, and growing out of our position. We stand midway between the old civilizations—a central sun, whose light goes out in all directions, overshadowing all the effete and crumbling monarchies. The

sky which spans the nations has in it no brighter stars than ours, and all the peoples of earth gaze at it with admiration, akin to that which filled the minds of the "wise men" when they beheld the "star in the east" that pointed out "where the young child was." We are the inheritors of a richer legacy than was ever bequeathed to any other people. The old Republics have crumbled into decay, but the young Republic rises before the nations panoplied in a giant's strength. Athenian grandeur is known only to the student of History, —and the columns and capitols of ancient Rome are so deeply imbedded in the earth that modern buildings find their safest foundations upon the ruined tops of their sunken structures. The languages of the Great Orators of antiquity are spoken no longer. All the beauty and splendor their eyes beheld, are covered over by the debris of buried ages. But our nation is yet in the full vigor of a robust and powerful manhood. We are yet prosecuting that "triumphal march of civilization across the desert," which the Puritans begun at Plymouth,—a march that could neither be arrested nor checked by a rebellion so terrible that it would have upheaved the strongest throne in Europe. The star of our empire moves onward in its western course, with startling velocity. Very soon the shores of the Atlantic and those of the Pacific will be locked together by "hooks of steel,"—with a band that will be made tighter and faster by the pressure of the world's commerce. But the other day, the "iron horse"— driven forward by a power snatched from the volcano and "reduced to regularity"—paused, tremblingly, for a moment, upon a mountain peak, more than eight thousand feet above the level of the sea, and then plunged still further on towards the East, upon its mission of reform. And the world is getting ready for the great events that are before us. But yesterday, one of the oldest and most compact monarchies of Europe, fell at a single blow of the popular arm. But yesterday, in another, where the Puritans struggled against the union of Church and State, a triumph of reform was won which promises to break that union to pieces. In a third, the most perfidious monarch who sits upon any throne, may, tomorrow, find himself an outcast from a people whom he has deceived by his falsehood and enslaved by his cunning. A little while ago, the followers of Confucius stood in the presence of an American President, and now under the counsel of a son of the Puritan fathers, are seeking to find out the process and progress of our greatness. A little while longer, and they will discover that it consists in free thought, free speech, a free press—and an open Bible,—in our form of Protestant Christianity and civilization, won from royalty by the "conscript fathers" of the Republic. And though Rus-

sia may pass on through Turkistan, and Afghanistan, and Herat, until the ancient wall of China may be crushed under the tread of her Cossack soldiery; and although England and France may reach India through the Isthmus of Suez,—yet the two civilizations—the old and new—will meet face to face, in an exterminating conflict. Then, when Buddhism shall fall before true christianity,—and "Joss-Houses" give way to Churches,—and human idols be broken down,—and the writings of Confucius shall give way to the Holy Bible, will the earnest prayers of the Puritan fathers be answered. The world will then come to know that they did not struggle and suffer in England without the watchful guardianship of Providence over them,—that the Mayflower did not sail in vain, —and that no nation can be happy, prosperous and free without maintaining the principles they illustrated by their lives and vindicated in their death. And then, in the midst of that final victory, the song of Miriam, the Prophetess, may be sung by all the nations:—"Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously, the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea;"—and those stirring words of one of New England's sweetest poets:

"The Pilgrim spirit has not fled:
It walks in noon's broad light;
And it watches the bed of the glorious dead,
With the holy stars by night.
It watches the bed of those who have bled,
And shall guard this ice-bound shore,
Till the waves of the bay, where the Mayflower lay
Shall foam and freeze no more."